

How Not to Make the United Front

By JOHN PEPPER.

The whole policy of our party is based on the united front. The task of the party convention will be to pass judgment upon the manner in which the party carried out the united front policy. One of the most important chapters, and we can add, one of the most instructive, is the history of the united front in Chicago. We can say that the general policies of the party during the last year were an excellent example of how to make the united front; and the example of Chicago is an excellent example of how not to make the united front.

What was the situation in Chicago? The Workers Party in Chicago carried on a hard and successful fight to win a standing for our party in the labor movement. In order to reach this objective it formed a united front with the Fitzpatrick group which is the ruling group of the Chicago Federation of Labor, and at the same time the ruling group of the Farmer-Labor Party. The members of the Workers Party of the Chicago district, thru their trade unions, entered into the Farmer-Labor Party, and formed the left wing of this party.

We believe that it was necessary to establish the united front with the Fitzpatrick group in Chicago; but we also believe that the methods, the tactics practised in bringing about this united front were fundamentally wrong.

What are the aims of the united front in general:

1. To organize the resistance of the masses against capitalism.
2. To bring the Communist Party into the masses.
3. Helping the masses to get rid of their reactionary or "progressive" leaders and to help them to a Communist leadership.

We Communists want the united front with the masses who are not as yet Communists. We are even willing to make the united front with the non-Communist labor leaders, if we cannot approach the masses in any other way. But in connection with this tactic there are two factors which must never be lost sight of:

1. It would be the most dangerous illusion to believe that the reactionary or "progressive" labor leaders will really fight against capitalism and the capitalist government, if the masses do not press them.

2. We must assure our independence under any circumstances. We can never for a moment sacrifice our freedom of criticism.

We must criticize the united front as it was carried out by the District Committee of our party in Chicago, and we make the criticism for the following reasons:

1. The united front here in Chicago remained on the surface. It was established only with the Fitzpatrick-Nockels group of leaders, but it was not sufficiently embedded into the depths of the masses of workers.
2. The District Committee of Chicago accepted the leadership of Fitzpatrick as an unquestionable fact and never attempted to assume leadership for the Communists.
3. The District Committee of Chicago abandoned the freedom of criticism of our party.

When the Central Executive Committee of our party criticized the Chicago District Committee of our party, for not emphasizing sufficiently the independence of the Workers Party as against the Farmer-Labor Party, they answered that they had no opportunity, because the Fitzpatrick group voted for amalgamation, Labor Party and recognition of Soviet Russia. But the District Committee of Chicago forgot that the Communist Party has something else and more to offer to the workers besides these three slogans. The District Committee forgot that it would be the duty of the Workers Party not only to get adopted by Fitzpatrick paper resolutions for amalgamation and recognition of Soviet Russia, but to force him to fight for those measures. Neither in the measures which they advocated nor in the fight for them was there an essential difference between the Fitzpatrick group and the District Committee of Chicago. When the Central Executive Committee demanded that the District Committee of Chicago, in the May 1st United Front Platform, take up the question of the fight against the Second and Second and a Half Internationals, the District Committee protested against this "untimely" measure.

The Chicago District Committee did not make a single attempt during the last year to criticize the Fitzpatrick group. In the last year the "Voice of Labor," the official organ of the Chicago District Committee had not a single article or remark which contained in any way criticism of the Fitzpatrick group. When in one case the editor wrote a modest and brief criticism, the Chicago District Committee censured him, and forbade any further adverse criticism. And again, after the July 3d convention, when Comrade Dunne wrote a critical article, directed against the Fitzpatrick group, the District Committee of Chicago restrained the editor from publishing the article in the "Voice of Labor."

The Chicago District Committee had too great a faith in the Fitzpatrick group. That was the reason that they did not recognize in time his swing to the right, and his agreement with Gompers. And after the July 3d convention the policy of the Chicago District Committee made it possible for the Fitzpatrick group to go farther and farther to the right, without any danger to itself of being attacked by the Communists. The Chicago District Committee made the "over-cautious" decision after the July 3d convention that it would not bring up the question of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party at all, in those trade unions in Chicago, which are affiliated with Fitzpatrick's Farmer-Labor Party. The District Committee did not make any attempt to denounce Fitzpatrick's double crossing role in the July 3d convention, at the meeting of the Chicago Federation of Labor at which the question of electing delegates to Fitzpatrick's Farmer-Labor Party was brought up. The District Committee did not hold any mass meeting of the party after the July 3d convention for the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, despite the instructions of the Central Executive Committee. (Only the Trade

Union Educational League held some meetings.)

The attempt on Foster's life was not utilized in Chicago against the labor bureaucracy, and despite instructions of the Central Executive Committee, the District Committee of Chicago arranged no mass meeting on that issue, whereas in New York there was a mass meeting of 7,000 workers. The District Committee of Chicago tolerated the unanimous election of Fitzpatrick, Nockels and Nelson in the Chicago Federation of Labor, without a single Communist speech, or a single criticism being uttered against them. And that was after the Decatur convention, after Fitzpatrick's and Nockels' open letter against amalgamation, against the Trade Union Educational League, and for Gompers, after the slanderous statement by Nockels that Foster himself had staged the attempt on his life—after the most vicious attack by Nelson at the Decatur convention against the Trade Union Educational League, amalgamation, Labor Party, and Communism. The Chicago District Committee claimed that they were too weak to put up opposition candidates against Fitzpatrick and Company. But they surely cannot pretend that they were too weak to make a public statement against the Fitzpatrick group on the day of the elections or to make a vigorous attack against them—to expose their swing to the right, their betrayal of the idea of the Labor Party, amalgamation, recognition of Soviet Russia.

The Chicago District Committee has not understood the united front, and has applied it erroneously. Instead of helping the masses to get rid of the leadership of the reactionary or "progressive" leadership of Nelson, Nockels, Fitzpatrick, they appeared in the eyes of the masses as the helpers of the Fitzpatrick group, and thereby strengthened the rule of the Fitzpatrick group.

It was our task to criticize the wrong attitude of the Chicago District Committee frankly and in a friendly manner. This criticism does not aim to bring into doubt their Communist integrity. The source of their bad tactic is not a lack of Communism, but a lack of political experience.

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